ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCHOOL OF EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING
MINUTES OF BOCES MEETING

November 22, 2004
5:30 p.m.
Technology/Media Library

In Attendance: Bee Kirk, Elaine Berman, John Dunn, Tim White and Suzanne Plaut
Staff: Jon Mann, Melissa McComas, Leann Asgari, Mike Barrett and Julie Stelzer

Approval of Minutes
Minutes from the September 27, 2004 meeting were unanimously approved.

Introductions
Suzanne Plaut introduced herself as a member of the BOCES representing the Public Education and Business Coalition. She is the Director of Professional Development for Secondary Schools in her capacity at the PEBC.

Recognition
Jon Mann thanked Bee Kirk for his assistance with the IBM grant award. RMSEL received nearly $4,000 of hardware including a new server.

Executive Director’s Report
Capital Campaign - We have a committed group of individuals that is meeting once a month. We know that raising money in house will be very limited. Therefore, the focus will be on grant writing and community giving programs. One of our parents, Melody Smith, is a professional grant writer and is currently working on several grant proposals for RMSEL. Our goal is to raise $325,000, and to date, we have raised $30,000.

The three main fundraising goals of the Capital Campaign are as follows:
1. Pay off new minibus leases
2. Finish playing field
3. Install air conditioning in the upstairs classrooms along with a small kitchen

John Dunn questioned if we would focus on Outward Bound for grants. Jon responded that we would and that organizations that support the ideals and philosophy of Outward Bound will also be approached. We will also contact previous RMSEL parents and alumni.

In House Labs - In the past, the PEBC has provided in house labs which are an opportunity for teachers associated with the PEBC to observe each other in a formalized lab setting. Teachers are released within the building to observe their colleagues. This process has been very successful for our teachers in that they are able to observe at various grade levels. Our teachers are also receiving constructive feedback from their peers. This professional development opportunity is valuable but rather expensive with regard to paying for the necessary substitute teachers for coverage. We will use this same model when the teachers for the National Conference come to RMSEL. This will make a more formalized setting for the visiting teachers. Suzanne Plaut offered help during the National Conference.

Systems and Structures - We have recognized for some time that the structure in the middle school and to some degree, the structure in the high school is not working in the way we want it to. We have 32 students per grade in the middle school with four teachers covering the three content areas, humanities, math and science. The logistics of managing the schedule is a struggle. We have managed this by having students from 6th, 7th and 8th grade in class together. The age range for these grade levels with regard to our Connected Math program is not as effective as we would like. The structure does not allow teachers to integrate, and also creates groups of students that are larger than they should be. Expeditionary Learning emphasizes structures
for planning, structures for integration and structures to get to know students really well. We feel we are violating all three of these with our existing structures. We are having intense discussions about these systems and structures. Inevitably, any proposals are about changes in existing positions. We are approaching this with our Leadership Team and our School Designer from Expeditionary Learning. Our goal is to have a new structure in place by the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year.

Bee asked if a deadline has been set in order to relieve some of the pressure. It would possibly be beneficial to break the process down into milestones and define timelines as well as the process for decision making in order to alleviate some of the stress.

Progress Reports - As part of our assessment that started at the beginning of last year, we looked at how we are reporting what students know. In other words, what story are we telling about their learning experience? We are looking at standardizing our progress reports to include a description of the expedition they have been involved with, the standards they have met and a narrative that says how they have done. It looks different in the lower school. Since we do not have credits and grades, we need to have some sort of articulation of the student’s learning. We have developed a transcript that not only describes what the school is about but also describes the content areas and when students have met the standards. The transcript also describes mini-challenges, internships, adventure, electives, community service and senior expeditions.

Suzanne questioned if there is any place on the progress report or transcript where we address character development since that is such a strong mission of the school. Jon recognized that we need more consistency with the way character is being assessed.

Bee asked if we have had to take any action to adjust to the new civics requirement. Jon explained that we did not have to make adjustments because the Utopia expedition covers those standards. We do need to make sure that those expeditions continue.

Finance Report
Julie Stelzer stated that the audit has been completed, and she is reviewing the draft audit from our new auditors, Johnson Holscher and Company. She is still working on the new Management Discussion and Analysis section of the audit in order to be in compliance with the new GASB34 requirement. Julie hopes to have this completed by next week.

Julie referenced the Budget to Actual report and pointed out a few concerns. She noted that professional development is at 88% of the budget, and this is a concern at mid-year. She also pointed out that the fundraising disbursement has not yet been made, so the Special Education budget shows over budget but in reality it is under budget. For the most part, all budgets are where they are expected to be at this time of the year. A revised budget will be presented to the BOCES in January to reflect the actual PPOR disbursement. Julie feels like we are right where we need to be at this point.

Organizational Diagnosis
Jon provided an organizational diagnosis he prepared for the Ritchie Fellows program. This is meant to be informational and not all information is pertinent to our organization. This information does provide achievement data, contextual data and perceptual data. It has become apparent through this data that Jon needs to work with the Math team. The leadership analysis and plan is being re-written. John Dunn asked if Jon’s mentor provided feedback on this document. Jon replied that his mentor, George Mansfield, did provide feedback. Jon also stated that the program is very good but feels stressful since it is making Jon look at what we are doing in a different way.

Elaine Berman stated that the School Accountability Reports (SARs) will be coming out in the next two weeks. RMSEL does not show up in any of the district results. We have the ability to access to the data through McGraw-Hill, so that it can be analyzed and dissected.
Constitution
Julie stated that the changes that need to be made to the constitution are minimal. The changes made are as follows:

- Changed districts to include Aurora Public Schools
- Updated our address
- Article 5 – membership – added Aurora Public Schools

Elaine questioned page 2, 2nd paragraph – “The terms of directors representing member districts shall be coterminous with their respective terms of office on their boards of education. As the terms of office expire, new directors of the Board shall be elected by the member districts’ boards of education.” Elaine questioned if we need the 2nd paragraph at all or maybe we should reword to: “The term of office continues until the member districts decide to appoint or elect another member.”

Elaine also questioned the paragraph 3 which states, “The one at-large director of the board shall be jointly appointed by the Public Education and Business Coalition and Outward Bound West.” We do not have an at-large board member. Does this position need to be filled? Bee questioned if the statute 25.5.105 would prevent us from having an at-large member. Leann Asgari thought that the PEBC was the at-large member. It was suggested that we go back and review the statute before making a decision.

By-Laws
Julie reviewed the changes as follows:

Page 2, Article II – Meetings – currently the by-laws state “regular meetings shall be held quarterly on the first Monday of every third month.” It was suggested that we remove that sentence and replace with “regular meetings will be held.”

Article X – Expeditionary Learning School Decision-Making Council
Julie made the change to call this the Community Council instead of just Council. She also suggested that we change these by-laws to reflect that the Community Council is an advisory group to the board and not a decision making council. Bee asked if the school has an accountability committee. Jon stated that the Community Council has served as our accountability committee. Action plans and improvement plans are the result of the Community Council. Bee suggested that we update the by-laws to reflect that the Community Council is also the school accountability committee in accordance with Colorado Statute.

Bee questioned Article X, Section b and agreed to work with Julie to come up with wording that reflects accountability to the board when operational and other decisions are made.

Intergovernmental Agreement 2001-2006
Jon suggested that since we need to make changes to the IGA anyway, maybe we could extend the agreement for the next five years. Elaine is not prepared to sign an agreement for five years. We will make the changes reflecting the addition of Aurora and revised enrollment numbers. Elaine asked if the enrollment numbers reflected in the agreement match our actual enrollment numbers. Elaine asked if Leann would e-mail everyone the actual numbers. Elaine asked what the process is if we exceed the numbers. Leann stated that she contacts the Service Link in that particular district. Jon asked what we need to do to confirm that we will have an agreement after the 2005-2006 school year. Tim White suggested that we start that dialogue. Elaine said she would like to look at the entire BOCES model and proposed that the board meet as a whole or a sub committee to review the governance model in order to determine if this BOCES structure is how we should proceed for the next decade. Jon suggested that we start working some timed conversations into our regular BOCES meetings. Since this BOCES was created when there were no other options, we should look at the model and discuss what our options are. John would also like to take this discussion back to his board to get their input. We will designate time at a future BOCES meeting to begin this discussion. It was suggested that we ask Rick Rufner to facilitate the conversation. Elaine might want to bring an expert on the various options.
Election of Officers
A motion made to nominate Bee Kirk as Vice President was unanimously approved. A motion made to nominate John Dunn as Secretary/Treasurer was unanimously approved.

The board adjourned at 7:10 p.m.